

Atlit. In the end, Amal was prepared to release the hostages if only Reagan would promise to see to it that the Lebanese detainees would be released, and refrain from taking retaliatory action.

Of course, it was very easy for Reagan to give non-binding promises. He was released from the dilemma of having to make concrete concessions to the hijackers, or running the risk of ordering military action of unknown consequences (though such an operation was indeed prepared for). Thus Reagan was able to turn the hijacking to his advantage, in contrast to the ordeal of the former US President Carter when Iranian students seized the US embassy in Teheran in 1979. At that time, Carter embarked on an abortive military operation to rescue American hostages. Ultimately he had to yield to the demands of the Iran students, an event that cost him his presidency in the ensuing elections.

Reagan expands on the incident

Not only did Reagan reap the benefits of Amal's having taken control of the hijacked airplane, by gaining the hostages' release in return for a promise. He also capitalized on the incident to realize an aim he had failed to achieve over the past two years: Punishing the Lebanese people and nationalist forces for resisting the May 17th accord; the invasion of Israeli, US and NATO forces; and the imposition of Camp David via Lebanon. This was especially bitter for the Reagan Administration which had planned for Lebanon becoming a NATO base, and possible site for the Rapid Deployment Forces. Thus, Reagan was quick to begin a campaign to halt traffic to Beirut's airport and stop Lebanese flights from landing in the US. He proceeded to threaten action to hit the «sources of terror». US imperialism's «anti-terrorist» campaign was refueled with the following aims:

1. Preparing to deliver a deadly blow to the Arab liberation movement, especially the Palestinian revolution, and to increase pressure on the nationalist regimes that are hostile to the US and 'Israel'. Such preparations are not restricted to the Middle East, but are directed against anti-imperialist forces and countries that «harbor and support terrorists». New «arguments» were produced to justify contemplated military operations against the people of El Salvador, Nicaragua, etc. Reagan's accusing finger extends farther, with insinua-

tions that the Soviet Union and other socialist countries also have a hand in «terror». When Reagan speaks of eradicating the roots of «terror», he is ultimately alluding to his aggressive aims against the socialist community.

2. Rallying domestic support for Reagan's aggressive policies which have come under broad criticism from various interest groups and the American people in general. A recent opinion poll had shown that a high percentage of the American people are not satisfied with Reagan's foreign policy; 42% of those interviewed favored reduction of aid to 'Israel'. The campaign around the hijacking was used to alleviate this situation. Robert Hunter, member of the Georgetown Institute for Strategic and International Studies published an article on the hijacking in which he evaluated that Reagan was the greatest beneficiary because within 17 days he succeeded in arousing the American people's maximum nationalist and chauvinist feelings.

3. By concentrating on the hijacking, the Reagan Administration managed to close ranks with its Western allies. Reagan worked hard to convince them that this and other «terrorism» is directed not only against the US, but against what he calls the «free world».

This is significant in the context of the prevailing crisis in the Western alliance. This crisis was clearly manifest at the last meeting of European Common Market countries held in Milan, Italy. This meeting turned down Reagan's «Star Wars» in favor of France's Eureka project for European armament. The meeting also adopted the West German-French project for establishing a European confederation. Washington fears that this project could lessen Western Europe's dependence on US foreign policy and lead to better understanding between Western and Eastern Europe.

The real source of terror

Although Reagan managed to reap the fruits of the TWA hijacking, this is not enough to erase from history and mankind's collective memory the long record of US crimes: military invasions, atrocities, instigating reactionary coups and supporting the most repressive regimes around the world - in short, state terrorism at its ultimate. This record includes the US being the first and only state to drop the atomic bomb (Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945), invading Vietnam and Grenada, and making possible the continuation of apartheid and Zionism's colonization of Palestine.

